

Conflict Can Be Healthy

By Cindy Knoll, Family Advocacy program Manager

Conflict is a part of life. In marriage it is unavoidable. Conflicts can be productive, creating deeper understanding, closeness and respect or they can be destructive, causing resentment, hostility and divorce. How conflicts get resolved, not how many occur, is the critical factor in determining whether a relationship will be healthy or unhealthy, intimate or cold. Below are some healthy tips for handling conflict. Take pride in handling your conflicts successfully.

HEALTHY CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- **Identify the problem or issue.** Make certain you both clearly understand the problem. Express clearly what you want, taking care to avoid blame. Listen to your partner's side.
- **Generate several possible solution.** Be creative and open minded. Avoid judging you partners proposals.
- **Evaluate the alternate solutions.** Eliminate solutions that are not acceptable to either of you. Narrow the list to one or two that seem best for you both. Be honest.
- **Decide on the best solution.** Select the alternative that is acceptable to both of you. It may not be exactly what you want but remember marriage requires compromise.
- **Implement the solution.** It's one thing to arrive at a decision, another to carry it out. Who is responsible to do what and when?
- **Follow up.** Not all solutions turn out as well as expected. Something may have been overlooked or something unexpected occurred. Revise!



COMMON MISTAKES

- Being too invested in getting your way or making demands on your partner.
- Focusing too much on what you could lose and not enough on what you both could gain.
- Bringing in additional issues before resolving the one you started.
- Forgetting that there are usually several ways of doing things and that your own reality is not the only reality. You will be much more effective if you are willing to see the other person's point of view.
- Discovering too late that more information was needed.
- Blocking the channels of communication by blaming, mind reading or bringing up the past.

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For an appointment